

Dear Chairman Powell and Commissioners, There is an embarrassing lack of fair and meaningful reporting on broadcast television. Reporters and news anchors brush by serious issues while nonsensical issues are rehashed to absurdity. Outright lies are repeated over and over again with no apparent consequences. I have no doubt the truth is there for newscasters to see, but, somehow, there is a filter through which all substance is removed, expounding fluff in an effort to give it depth. Deserving, substantive candidates must jump through hoops of absurdity and are removed leaving less deserving, more manipulative candidates to be elected on a basis of fluff. Candidates who should be elected by informed voters are passed over in favor of a carefully contrived image of a candidate. Since broadcasters are not presenting an accurate view of our political environment, the FCC must require them to do it.

As a citizen who wants to be informed about the political and electoral issues that affect my life, I am greatly disappointed by the lack of informative television programming.

Local public affairs programming is virtually non-existent--constituting less than one half of 1% of all local programming. More than half of news broadcasts prior to the 2002 elections did not include a single campaign story. Our democracy is at risk when many Americans don't know basic facts about the candidates or the issues, as was the case in the 2000 elections.

Since broadcasters have clearly failed in their obligation to serve the public interest, the FCC should define meaningful public interest requirements that include local civic and electoral affairs programming. At a minimum, broadcasters should air three hours per week of local civic and electoral affairs programming, with at least two hours devoted to substantive election coverage in the six weeks prior to Election Day.

As the elections approach, a well-functioning democracy demands that citizens have access to a diversity of opinions and voices on the choices confronting us.

Sincerely,

Laura Hirasaka  
94 Soundview Drive  
Port Jefferson, NY 117771148